

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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SUBJECT: EGYPT AND THE ICFTU

REF: A) STATE 145307

B) CAIRO 1643

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO ICFTU OFFICIALS, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ICFTU AND THE EGYPTIAN FEDERATION OF LABOR HAVE MARKEDLY IMPROVED OVER THE LAST 18 MONTHS. HOWEVER, DURING THE INCREAS-
INGLY FREQUENT CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCUSSION ABOUT POSSIBLE AFFILIATION NOR HAS THERE BEEN ANY INDICATION THAT THE EGYPTIANS ARE EVEN CONTEM-
PLATING AFFILIATION. END SUMMARY.

2. ICFTU OFFICIALS IN BRUSSELS DISMISS REPORTS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE AFFILIATION OF THE EGYPTIAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AS PURE SPECULATION. ACCORDING TO ICFTU ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL VANDERVECKEN, THE EGYPTIANS WOULD "KILL THEMSELVES POLITICALLY" WITH THE REST OF THE ARAB WORLD IF THEY PURSUED SUCH A COURSE AT THIS TIME OR IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. NEVER-
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THELESS, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS ARE IMPROVING

STEADILY AND ICFTU SUPPORT FOR EGYPTIAN LABOR LEADER GHARIB IN HIS SUCCESSFUL BID FOR A DEPUTY SEAT ON THE GOVERNING BODY AT THE ILO EARLIER THIS MONTH IS CONSIDERED A POSITIVE FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER RAPPORT. VANDERVECKEN TOLD US THAT GHARIB, WITH ICFTU SUPPORT, GARNERED 85 VOTES FOR THE POST AS COMPARED WITH 26 FOR A LIBYAN CANDIDATE.

3. ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY KERSTEN WILL VISIT CAIRO FOR THREE DAYS IN LATE JULY. AMONG AGENDA ITEMS FOR HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH EGYPTIAN LEADERS MAY BE THE CALL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE BY LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN SEVERAL THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AND BY CERTAIN CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS. THE ICFTU OPPOSES THE HOLDING OF SUCH A CONFERENCE EXCEPT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ILO. THE EGYPTIANS, ACCORDING TO VANDERVECKEN, ARE SYMPATHETIC WITH THE ICFTU POSITION, PARTICULARLY SINCE TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS ARE BEING SUGGESTED AS POSSIBLE CONFERENCE SITES. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH ICFTU OFFICIALS IN GENEVA, GHARIB, A FORMER LABOR MINISTER, STATED THAT HE WAS OPPOSED "TO HOLDING TIME-CONSUMING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES FOR NATIONAL PURPOSES WHICH RARELY ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING, " BUT ADDED THAT HE WOULD SUPPORT GENEVA AS THE SITE OF THE CONFERENCE IF IT SHOULD TAKE PLACE.

4. DURING THE SAME CONVERSATION, ACCORDING TO VANDERVECKEN, GHARIB ALSO SAID THAT "WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL" AND THAT IT WAS TIME TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUES FOR WHICH THE ILO WAS CREATED AND FOR WHICH TRADE UNIONS EXIST.

5. VANDERVECKEN ATTRIBUTED MUCH OF THE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ICFTU AND THE EGYPTIAN LABOR FEDERATION TO KAHALIFA, THE EGYPTIAN LABOR ATTACHE IN GENEVA, WHO VANDERVECKEN DESCRIBES AS ASTUTE AND MUCH RESPECTED IN CAIRO. WHEN CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF THE REFERENCE TO "BETTER TIES WITH UNIONS IN THE WEST" BY GAMAL EMAN, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR OF THE EGYPTIAN FEDERATION OF LABOR (REFTEL B) IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THIS NEW RELATIONSHIP MAY BE THE RESULT OF A PROGRAMMED EFFORT BY THE EGYPTIANS. GREENWALD

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